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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000814

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SUBJECT: ROBERT MANUEL CONFIRMATION PROCESS: COUNTING THE VOTES

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 793

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Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).).

¶1. (C) Summary: The ratification of Robert Manuel as Prime Minister increasingly depends on Chamber of Deputies' majority bloc, the Coalition of Progressive Parliamentarians (CPP). President Preval's political party, Lespwa, is an integral part of this bloc. Preval held the first in a series of meetings with Lespwa parliamentarians, but did little to convince them Manuel was the man for the job. The CPP's blessing would assure Manuel's ratification not only in the Chamber of Deputies, but in the Senate as well. Since both chambers of parliament must ratify the nomination, a rejection by the CPP, and thus the full Chamber, would render the Senate vote irrelevant. It follows that the decision truly rests with the CPP. Manuel was scheduled to present his personal documents to the Chamber of Deputies commission June 4, but neither chamber is expected to vote before June ¶5. End summary.

¶2. (C) The Coalition of Progressive Parliamentarians (CPP), with 52 members, now has a majority in the Chamber of Deputies. Following a CPP meeting with Robert Manuel June 4, CPP member Deputy Steven Benoit (Independent, Petionville/West) told us he was unimpressed with Manuel's credentials, both in terms of education and experience. Benoit said the CPP will establish a common position on Manuel through an internal vote, potentially as early as June ¶5. They will all vote this common position when Manuel's nomination comes for a vote before the entire Chamber of Deputies. Since the bloc has a majority, their internal decision will determine Manuel's fate in the Chamber. (Note: Rumors abound that outgoing Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis strongly influences the CPP, with some accusing Alexis of bribing deputies. Deputy Benoit denied that Alexis had any control over the bloc. End note.)

¶3. (C) Lespwa Steering Committee member Anes Lubin told us June 3 that Lespwa had officially decided their members would vote according to the decision of the CPP. Even Lespwa senators' votes hinged on the CPP decision. Manuel needs nine votes in the Senate, a majority of the 16-senator quorum. If the CPP votes against Manuel, the Senate vote is

irrelevant, as both chambers have to ratify the nomination. If the CPP approves Manuel, he will automatically secure the votes of six Lespwa senators and the two Fanmi Lavalas senators, who have told us their vote will mirror that of the CPP. The five Fusion and OPL senators have already agreed to vote in favor of Manuel (reftel). So, if the CPP approves of Manuel, he is also guaranteed to pass the Senate with at least 13 votes. (Note: Lespwa actually holds seven Senate seats, but Senate President Kely Bastien (Lespwa, North) cannot vote. End note.) Therefore, Manuel's confirmation hinges on the CPP. Senator Rudy Herivaux (Fanmi Lavalas, West) told us June 4 that the Senate will not vote before Monday, June 9.

¶4. (C) Both Lubin and Deputy Benoit told us that Senate President Bastien and Chamber President Jean-Jacques (Lespwa, Delmas/West) told Preval outright that Manuel could not secure a majority vote in either chamber. Deputy Benoit lamented that Preval did not make his selection based on which candidate had majority support in Parliament.

¶5. (C) According to several sources in Parliament, the Lespwa senators and deputies met with President Preval June 12. Robert Manuel did not/not attend. They spent the majority of the time discussing the future of the Lespwa platform and its position with regard to agriculture and national production. The President only mentioned Manuel once, referring to his experience working with the GOH and saying he would do a good job as PM. The parliamentarians responded that they did not think Manuel was the best candidate for the job. Preval did not promote Manuel's candidacy beyond that. According to Deputy Patrick Domond (Lespwa, Jacmel/Southeast), Preval and Lespwa reached no conclusions during the meeting and would meet again June 5 to

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continue their discussion. Several other deputies expressed disappointment after the meeting.

¶6. (C) Comment: Both chambers of Parliament must ratify Manuel's nomination. Thus, if the Chamber does not ratify, the Senate decision is irrelevant. Since ratification in the Chamber would sway the Senate vote in Manuel's favor, it follows that the decision truly rests with the Chamber at this point. The CPP's current majority in the Chamber renders it the decision-maker. However, constantly shifting alliances in both Chambers always leave the door open to eleventh-hour surprises.

SANDERSON